

COMMUNICATION TO CHANGE STRUCTURE CONDITIONS

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Introduction

- **Is Social Change Communication an entirely new development?**
- **OR Are we only becoming aware of it?**
- **Is there a consensus that “Social Change” is always positive and beneficial to society?**



Communication To Change Structural Conditions

Humans as social beings have a profound need/necessity to communicate, hence we invented languages, writing and other media of expression.

- **Throughout the ages, humans in different communities have used various media (depending on the level of social and technological development prevailing at the time), to mobilize themselves, organize and collectively solve problems/take actions which resulted in Social Change or in changing structural conditions be it for the better or for worse.**



• Recall, for example how the existence (read invention) of the printing press was used to break the monopoly of the Catholic Clergy over scriptural knowledge, influence the power dynamics within Christianity and promote greater participation and contest of ideas. This helped protestanism to flourish.



- In Nigeria, through the 100 years of British Colonialism (1861-1960), the various peoples organized themselves in different ways to resist British rule. Eventually the elite and the workers' movement were able to negotiate an end to British rule in Nigeria. The anti-colonialists forces organized mass rallies, meetings (open and clandestine) where debates, negotiations and consensus-building took place; they raised funds, published and distributed leaflets and newspapers; these were complimented with nationalist songs, poetry and popular literature. The people had full ownership of the process.

The same process occurred towards the end of the 18th Century and at the beginning of the 19th Century when the Bolsheviks and other forces overthrew the Tsarist autocracy and installed Socialism in Russia.



Objective Conditions Necessitating Change

In all the Examples:

- **Inequality**
- **Injustice–**
- **Alienation**
- **Exclusion of the minority from power and decision-making**



Process of Change involved some of these features we currently use to describe Social Change
Communication

- Existence of a facilitating agency, “Catalyst/Stimulus”
- Increased consciousness of the injustices of the conditions and of people’s inalienable rights
- A crop of leaders committed to facilitating the process of discussion and problem-solving/Change
- Analysis of the situation
- Debates on options and agreeable response
- Consciousness raising
- Organising
- Action
- Change in Conditions/Social Relations



Limitations

- New power dynamics
- New forms of inequality
- Use of oratory and ideological propaganda
- Vested interests (of leaders)



Building on heritage and existing traditions of Social Change Communication

- **Some form of participatory/Social Change Communication exists already in many community self-help projects – providing social amenities and infrastructure**
- **Many communities or community groups/organizations have governance systems that are horizontal, democratic, and participatory**

E.g. at Illah (Nigeria) in the 1970s indigenes of the town came together and provided a Post Office, Town Hall and Secondary School. To date the community is involved in the administration of the school



Process of providing these structures embodied a good number of the key features or Participatory/Social Change Communication

- **It was initiated by some community leaders but executed within a horizontal social framework**
- **Community Dialogue/Democratic participatory planning**
- **Collective Action (based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities)**
- **Sense of Ownership**
- **Positive Impact on social condition**


(The Town Hall and Post Office increased access to networking both within and outside the town), while the school improved access to education.

*** Most noteworthy is the fact that these project were not externally initiated and had absolutely no donor input.**



Why then has this community self-help culture (Social Capital) not been boldly applied to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care?

Some of the reasons may include:

- Externally-Driven, Top-Down nature of HIV/AIDS programming
 - Lack of participatory and democratic decision-making within the global institutions driving the initiative
 - Inadequate space for the expression of community voices in decision-making
 - Lack of faith or tendency to rubbish indigenous knowledge on the part of social-scientists
 - Vested interests on the part of those who drive programming
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- Persistent bias in favour of addressing HIV/AIDS as a purely health-related epidemic (and not as a socio-economic epidemic)
- The disease-control mindset
- The tendency to place communities in social boxes – targeting programmes at segments of vulnerable groups – youth, women, MSM, drug users, sex workers, PLWHAs etc as if they live in social and sexual interfacing
- Continued reliance on obsolete paradigms



- As Richard Covey puts it:
- *“If you want to make minor, incremental changes and improvements work on practices, behaviour or attitude. But if you want to make significant, quantum improvements, work on paradigm”.* (Covey, 2004: 19)
- *“But the problem is that paradigms, like traditions, die hard. Flawed paradigms go on for centuries after a better one is discovered”.* (Covey)



- **Timidity in fully embracing the ‘Social Capital Paradigm’**

Social Capital refers to features of social organization such as networks of civic engagements, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

- Robert Putnam (1993)

Civic engagement, in this connection, refers to all those activities that are the product of social and cultural activities within the community.

Social and political networks are organized horizontally, not hierarchically, thereby encouraging citizens (people) to value solidarity, civic participation and integrity.

Communication to Change Structural Conditions: Lessons Learnt at CLP about HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care

- The Change promoting agency, as facilitator or catalyst needs to unlearn (stop itself from working from a “Go-Fix-them” perspective).
- Adopt the ‘Social Capital paradigm’ and work with people in their reference groups and social networks.

The Social Capital approach has the benefit of creating space for:

- reinforcing people’s comfort level
- eliciting and sustaining positive peer influence
- inter-personal, live exchanges
- much deeper discourse
- receiving more honest feedback (due to the existing mutual trust)
- psychosocial support
- facilitating coordination and communication
- study relationship of mutual trust and reciprocity

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- Address HIV/AIDS prevention within a broader context of health and well-being (Deal with dynamics of sexual relations)
- Support options that reinforce people's aspirations e.g. Infidelity using the Condom Vs Mutual Fidelity in a sexually fulfilling relationship
- Work with Couples to address patriarchy and gender inequalities (4,000+ Couples in Pre-Marriage Course)
 - ✓ **Integrated approach: HIV prevention as part of Maternal and Child Care,**
 - ✓ **Create an enabling environment, include skills, address related/contextual issues e.g. Parenting, How to Improve and have a fulfilling Sex Life, Domestic Violence, Managing Family Finances, Conflict Resolution, Family Planning etc.**
 - ✓ **Promotes non-patriarchial values**
 - ✓ **FBO has complete ownership of the programme**
 - ✓ **Programme evaluation – every 5 years to allow room for Couples to have some significant experience of family life and to perhaps have had one or two children**
 - ✓ **Results/Impact: (From the first 5 year evaluation)**

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- ✓ Men participating in domestic chores, greater value for the girl child (reduced male-child preference), more fulfilled sexual and emotional life, greater sense of partnership among spouses (room for wives to express voices and participate in decision-making)
- ✓ Need to appreciate that previous patriarchal consciousness persists even after the social relations have changed
- ✓ Strategy is to build a critical mass of Families not founded on patriarchal values
- Frame Issues in the Language of the people (Respect Cultural ideology + local media – songs, dance, poetry and drama)
- Work with everyone, on gender inequalities or gender equity



LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!

**Take a Long-Term Perspective
of Social Change**

THANK YOU!

